



**2020  
ERIE COUNTY  
SUMMER YOUTH  
EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM**



*Erie County Department of Social Services Comprehensive Employment Division  
Marie A Cannon, Social Services Commissioner*



Over the past four summers, beginning with the summer of 2017, the Buffalo Urban League (BUL) and Catholic Charities (CC) have collaborated with Erie County Department of Social Services (ECDSS) to administer the Summer Youth Employment Program. Each year this collaborative based model has been successful in implementing a program that provides youth participants with paid summer work experience. Work experience introduces youth to the world of work, exposure to career pathways, and opportunities to help build work readiness.

On March 7, 2020 Governor Cuomo declared a State disaster emergency to enable New York to more quickly and effectively contain the spread of COVID-19. As a result of the public health emergency, several statewide measures were instituted to reduce the spread of COVID-19 including the closure of schools and the reduction of in-office workforce operations for non-essential businesses. Additionally, businesses were required to implement new protocols for in-person work to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among employees and business patrons. As a result, employment opportunities for youth this summer were limited.

The Summer Youth Employment Program is of critical importance to youth and their families, especially as we address the social, health, and economic impact of the COVID pandemic. As we prepared for the 2020 SYEP we wanted to ensure that it would be operated safely and effectively during these challenging times. With the uncertainty over how COVID-19 would affect worksite availability and site staffing we had to gain a sense of the feasibility of businesses and agencies to participate and host youth in a safe work environment.

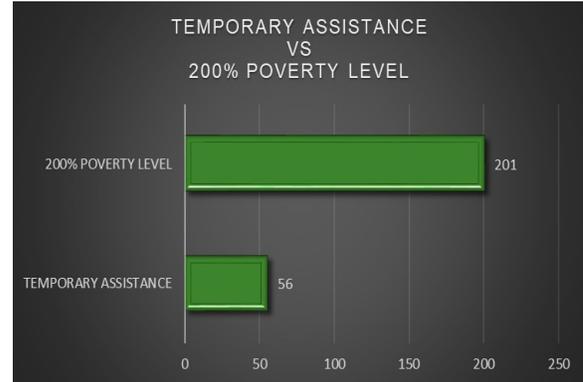
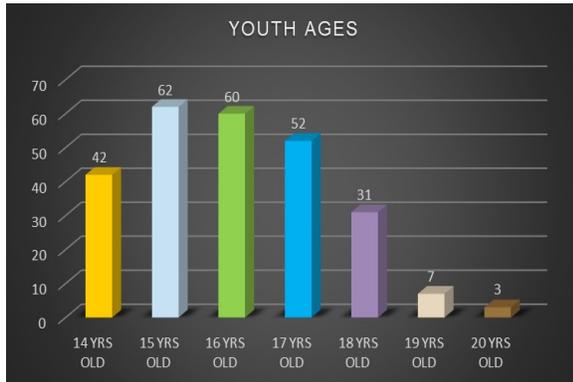
The safety of SYEP participants was essential. All workplaces and education/training settings were required to comply with health and safety regulations and adhere to State and federal guidance related to COVID-19, including sector specific business re-opening guidance. Additional steps required, included those related to social distancing, facility cleaning and disinfecting, the wearing of face coverings and practicing of proper hygiene.

Adhering to COVID-19 safety guidelines, the program was downsized to service 257 youth, which is only about a third of the number served compared to recent years' in Erie County. However, the County and program operators were committed to utilizing the most of its given resources to benefit the lives of participating youth this summer.

The New York State Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget appropriated \$45 million in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to support the 2020 New York State Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Erie County Department of Social Services received an allocation of \$2 million.

<b>SYEP Comparison Data</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Youth Applications Certified	1326	1159	1450	276
Number of Youth Not Served Due to Funding Limitations	602	419	747	0
Total Youth Placed	724	740	703	257
Total Number of Youth in City of Buffalo Enrolled	534	464	553	203
Total Number of Youth in Rest of County Enrolled	190	276	150	54

The target population to be served by the program are youth, ages fourteen to twenty, from low income households (Family Assistance (FA) recipients; former FA recipients that have reached their 60-month limit and transitioned to Safety Net Assistance; or under 200% of federal poverty guidelines, including SNAP, MA, HEAP and SSI recipients) residing in Erie County. With in this population special efforts were made to engage youth who are: in foster care, pregnant and/or parenting, criminal justice or gang involved, runaways, homeless, underachieving academically, disabled, limited English proficient, high school drop outs and/or PINS.



All youth participants attended an individual or group orientation session in accordance with CDC guidelines. Innovative approaches included outdoor locations and small group socially distance classrooms. During the orientation youth were given an overview of the program including: available services, program expectations, participant program schedules and information on the range of services Buffalo Urban League, Catholic Charities, Department of Social Services, as well as other community services that can be accessed through the program. The orientation is interactive and gives the participant opportunity to discuss what they would like to get from the program, their aspirations and concerns. Each youth received a handbook which outlined program policies, procedures, and expectations.

Youth then received an individual assessment and individual service strategy (ISS) with the assigned BUL/CC case manager. The ISS included education/academic levels, skills, interest, vocation, occupational and personal support needs. The information from the assessment was utilized to determine worksite placement.

As part of the program, all youth received financial literacy instruction and sexual harassment prevention in the workplace training.

Additionally supportive services, including transportation assistance, case management and job retention services were provided.

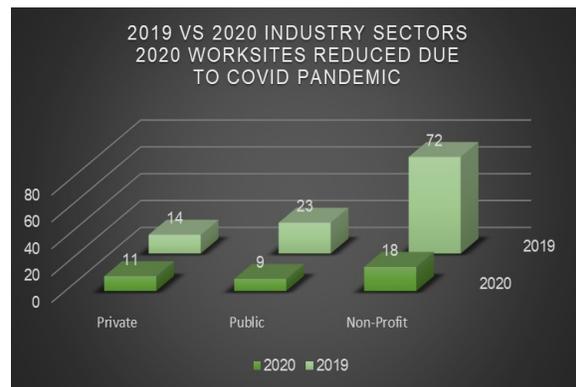
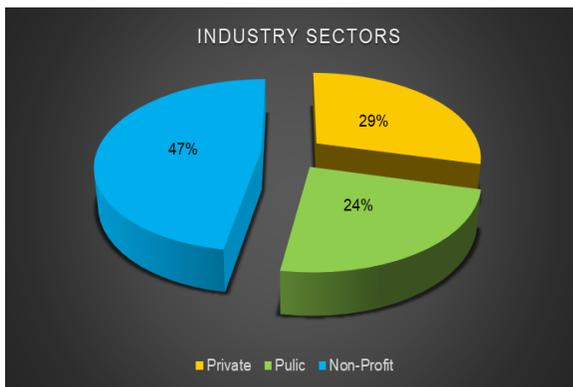


Participants work in entry-level jobs in a variety of industries, including: arts and recreation, camp, community service, day care, educational services, financial services, food service, health care/medical, hospitality/tourism, information technology, legal services, maintenance/custodial, manufacturing, marketing/public relations, media/entertainment, and retail.

Youth participants work at their assigned worksite 20-40 hours per week and were paid \$12.80 per hour. Participants received reimbursement via pay card, for their time in work experience and other program approved activities such as financial literacy, sexual harassment prevention in the workplace training and career exploration. Youth were also eligible to receive an incentive payment based on program attendance and work performance.

Youth were matched to work experience sites in various manners which included proximity of site location to the youth's home, youth occupational interests and availability of worksite slots.

Thirty-eight organizations/businesses hosted youth during the 2020 program to provide youth with exposure and experience in areas of interest; develop and reinforce soft skills, work habits and behaviors; and provide real labor force attachment.



All industries sectors were affected by COVID-19, this was evident by the decrease of 65% of participating worksites from 2019 to 2020. Non-profit worksites had to cancel planned summer programs and events due to the pandemic resulting in their inability to host youth. Private sector employers played an important role in filling the gap due to the loss of non-profit worksites. Private sector employers made up 29% of the total participating worksites in 2020, an increase from 2019, in which private sector employers represented 21% of participating worksites.

### New Worksites

The 2020 program welcomed 10 new worksites to participate. One such worksite was the Providence Farm Collective  located in East Aurora, a farming program to help refugee families. Thirty-one youth from seven ethnic groups were engaged in activities at the farm.

Another new worksite to the 2020 program year was Rachel's Mediterranean Grill , a private sector employer with a number of locations throughout Erie County. Eight youth were assigned to this worksite and at the end of the program year were all hired to continue employment.

With the 2020 US Census  underway, some youth participants had an opportunity to visit homes that had not responded to the census and encourage households to complete the survey to make sure that everyone in Erie County is counted. Census data helps determine how federal dollars will be allocated to states, counties and communities, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds which support the SYEP.

Organization/Business	Employment Sector	Number of Youth
African American Cultural Center	Public	3
Apollo Media Center	Public	1
Appleseed 123 Inc.	Public	3
BestSelf Behavioral Health, INC.	Non-Profit	10
Buffalo All Star Extreme (BASE)	Public	10
Buffalo Urban League	Non-Profit	37
Collectors Inn	Public	2
Colvin Resales	Private	1
Crucial Community Center	Non-Profit	27
DCD Delivery	Private	6
Enterprise Charter School	Non-Profit	10
Erie County Department of Social Services	Public	7
Feature Eatery	Private	2
FruitBelt Coalition, Inc. AKA Fruit of the City	Non-Profit	2
Gloria J Parks Center	Non-Profit	2
Goodwill of WNY	Non-Profit	2
Grace Guest House	Non-Profit	2
Hair it is! 580	Private	2
Homespace Corporation	Non-Profit	2
Hope of Buffalo	Non-Profit	1
I'm Living B	Private	2
Jerk's Soda Fountain	Private	1
Kut Life Barbershop	Private	1
Lackawanna Yemen Soccer Club	Non-Profit	33
Larke Enterprises, LLC.	Private	1
Love Alive Fellowship Church	Non-Profit	1
Mezza Inc.	Private	4
Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church	Non-Profit	15
Northwest Buffalo Community Center	Non-Profit	5
Open Buffalo, Inc.	Non-Profit	10
Providence Farm Collective	Non-Profit	31
Rachel's Mediterranean Grill	Private	8
Sunshine Vegan Eats LLC	Public	2
The Salvation Army	Non-Profit	2
The Unit Promise	Non-Profit	1
TKP Cleaning Inc.	Public	4
Toni DuBois- Croom Farmers Agency	Private	2
West Seneca Central School District	Public	2
<b>Total Youth Placed</b>		<b>257</b>

## Non-Employment Activities

To augment the work component of the SYEP, youth could participate in non-employment activities which will better prepare them as they continue their education and transition to the world of work. Non-employment activities included work based learning workshops, educational and/or career exploration activities, classroom training, job search and retention strategies, basic skill instruction and life skills training. Youth interested in these components were assigned to Buffalo Urban League or Department of Social Services Employment Division to administer these activities as part of their work experience. Non-employment activities such as job readiness training, career exploration, mentoring, financial literacy, and/or education were limited to no more than 30% of their hourly participation as per OTDA requirements. For example a youth engaged in the program for 20 hours per week was limited to a maximum of 6 hours per week in non-employment educational activities.

Youth assigned to the Buffalo Urban League were able to participate in a number of virtual learning workshops. These workshops included career exploration and planning, personal workplace growth and skill building activities including critical thinking and problem solving skills. Connections to professionals through virtual sessions included a Chef, National Guard Recruiter, Attorney, Project Manager, Auditor, Care Coordinator for individuals with disabilities, Neuroscience Nurse Practitioner, Yoga Instructor, Owner of Fitness and Wellness Center and a School Principal.

Youth assigned to the Department of Social Services in addition to completing office related tasks for the Employment Division, SNAP, Subsidy Day Care, and Senior Services, the youth participated in Job Readiness Training. The Employment Division Job Club staff facilitated classroom activities which included but not limited to resume preparation, interviewing skills, conflict resolution, time management, and stress management. The youth also created vision boards of their career goals. One project the youth worked on, was the sorting, organizing, and wrapping books. In 2014 the Department of Social Services started the Reading is a Blast initiative. This initiative through the generous donation of books from Project Flight a not-for-profit organization has enabled the department to create reading centers for children in various Social Services waiting areas throughout County buildings, distribute specially wrapped books during the holidays and to new mothers. This allows children to explore books and promote childhood literacy.

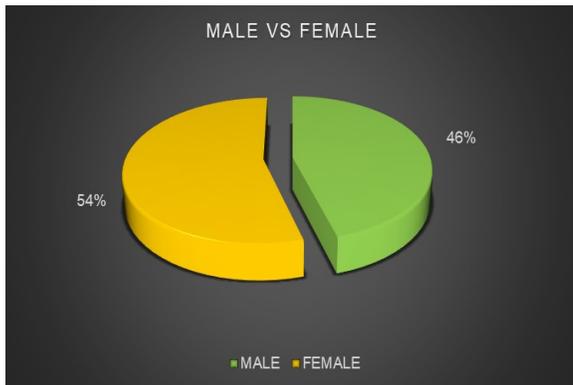
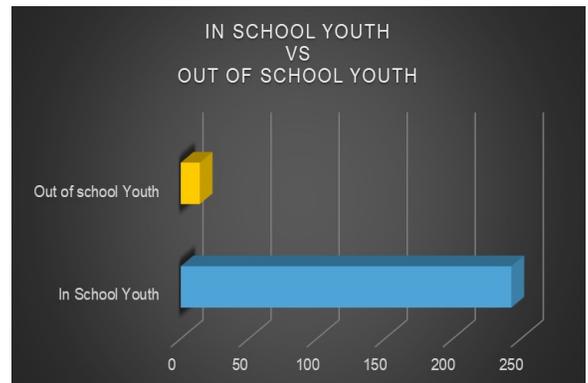
## End of Program Incentives



To cap off a successful program year, youth received a backpack filled with school supplies.

## Participant Characteristics

School Status	FA or SN-Family	200%	Total
In School Youth	54	189	243
Out of School Youth	2	12	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>257</b>



Gender	FA or SN-Family	200%	Total
Male	18	99	117
Female	38	102	140
Neither/Other	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>257</b>

Ethnicity	FA or SN-Family	200%	Total
White	7	23	30
Black	42	137	179
Hispanic	5	14	19
Asian	0	10	10
American Indian	1	0	1
Pacific Islander	0	0	0
Other	1	17	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>257</b>

